

junior and senior high school females to the multitude of opportunities available to women in science- and math-related occupations. Studies indicate that, while females thrive in science and mathematics in grade school, far too frequently female students lose interest in these subjects by the time they reach graduation. As Kristine Thompson, a geologist and curator of the Mammoth Site's In-Situ Bonebed notes, "In the past, many girls and young women with an interest in science and math often were redirected to other fields. Although women account for half of the work force, they constitute less than 20 percent of scientists."

Consequently, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's, NOAA, National Weather Service forecast offices in Aberdeen, Rapid City, and Sioux Falls, in conjunction with local and State agencies, schools, and businesses, are cohosting Women in Science conferences throughout South Dakota. These symposiums, created 5 years ago by the Aberdeen National Weather Service, are designed to foster personal connections between accomplished professional women scientists and female students. The Women in Science Conference creates a unique forum where successful female scholars and professionals meet and hopefully inspire young women to continue developing and cultivating their interests in the natural and physical sciences. To demonstrate the significance of these events, Governor Mike Rounds, by Executive Proclamation, declared this week "Women in Science Week in South Dakota."

Among the notable guests featured throughout the week is keynote speaker Karen Stoos. Karen is a native of Hoven, SD, and is currently a biologist at the Genetics and Molecular Biology Branch of the National Human Genome Research Institute in Bethesda, MD. Other presenters' areas of expertise span the fields of geology, animal science, engineering, medicine, and metrology. Additionally, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Weather Service, and the Girl Scouts will have exhibits and representatives in attendance. More than 1,000 seventh through twelfth-grade students and teachers are already registered to attend.

I am proud to have the opportunity to share with my colleagues this exciting and significant series of events, and I am very pleased that the conference's efforts are being publicly honored and celebrated. I strongly commend the hard work and dedication of the National Weather Service and all of the sponsors of the Women in Science Conference, as their contributions will positively impact the lives of so many young women in South Dakota.

COMMENDING IFES

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, we are all very impressed by the results of the

Iraqi elections in January. The results exceeded our expectations, and I am hopeful it is evidence that Iraq is moving toward democracy. I wanted to add my voice to the letter sent by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice commending IFES. Without the tremendous work of our troops who provided security at over 10,000 polling places around Iraq and the work of IFES, these historic elections would not have happened. I ask unanimous consent that the letter from Secretary Rice to IFES President Richard Soudriette dated February 28, 2005, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the, material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington, DC, February 28, 2005.

Mr. RICHARD SOUDRIETTE,
President, International Foundation for Election Systems, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SOUDRIETTE: On behalf of the Department of State, I would like to offer my thanks for the International Foundation for Election Systems' role in supporting the recent elections in Iraq. On January 30 we saw millions of Iraqis brave intimidation and threats of death to demonstrate their commitment to democracy. We are heartened by this process for the future of vibrant, thriving democracy in Iraq.

The success of this first step in Iraq's transition to democracy is due in no small part to your organization's diligence and the dedication of your highly skilled staff. IFES's guidance on election regulations and operations, complaints adjudication, and public information not only helped to ensure transparency but also served to buoy confidence that these historic elections were indeed credible and transparent. Additionally, IFES's continuing role in building the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq's capacity for future electoral events will buttress Iraq's evolving democratic institutions.

Thank you again for your great contribution to the future of Iraq. Together, we will help the Iraqi people realize their dream of living in a free and democratic society.

Sincerely,

CONDOLEEZZA RICE.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CASUALTIES IN IRAQ

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, 1,500 American service men and women have been killed in Iraq, and more than 11,000 have been wounded.

We were all moved by the Iraqi elections last month. I and all Americans support the creation of a legitimate, functioning Iraq Government that guarantees the rights of all Iraqis. We all want democracy in Iraq to take root firmly and irrevocably.

But we also want to know when we will have achieved our mission in Iraq and when our 135,000 soldiers will be able to return home with dignity and honor.

At a March 1 hearing in the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Abizaid, the leader of the Central Command, gave the clearest indication so far about when our mission might end.

General Abizaid said, "I believe that in 2005, the most important statement

that we should be able to make is that in the majority of the country, Iraqi security forces will take the lead in fighting the counterinsurgency. That is our goal."

About the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces, General Abizaid said, "I think in 2005 they'll take on the majority of the tasks necessary to be done."

If the Iraqis make the significant progress this year that General Abizaid expects, it is perfectly logical to expect that a large number of American troops will be able to return home.

Our troops are clearly still needed to deal with the insurgency. But there is wide agreement that the presence of American troops is also fueling the insurgency and making it more difficult to defeat.

After the election, the administration announced that 15,000 American troops added to provide security for the elections would return, and additional troops should be able to return this year. Doing so would clearly help take the American face off the occupation and send a clearer signal to the Iraqi people that we have no long-term designs on their country.

In the February 28 edition of US News and World Report, General Abizaid emphasized this basic point. He said "An overbearing presence, or a larger than acceptable footprint in the region, works against you . . . The first thing you say to yourself is that you have to have the local people help themselves."

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz made the same point in a hearing at the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 3. He said, "I have talked to some of our commanders in the area. They believe that over the course of the next six months you will see whole areas of Iraq successfully handed over to the Iraqi army and Iraqi police."

Before the election, the administration repeatedly stated that 14 of the 18 provinces in Iraq are safe. We heard a similar view in a briefing from Ambassador Negroponte.

If some areas can be turned over to the Iraqis in the next 6 months, as Secretary Wolfowitz indicated, it should be done. It would be a powerful signal to the Iraqi people that the United States is not planning a permanent occupation of their country. If entire areas are being turned over to the Iraqis, we should be able to bring many American troops home.

The road ahead will be difficult because the violence is far from ended. Sixty-six Americans soldiers have been killed in the 31 days since the election an average of two a day. But the election has produced new hope, and the Iraqi people are now forming the Transitional Government that will write a new constitution for the country and hold elections next December for the permanent new government that will lead their new democracy.

We all hope for success in Iraq, and appropriate withdrawals of our forces can clearly be an important factor in achieving that success.